



BCOP – trustee information pack

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BCOP

Waterside House, Unit 3 Waterside Business Park, 1649 Pershore Road, Stirchley, Birmingham.
B30 3DR

Phone: 0121 459 7670

Email: general@bcop.org.uk

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1. Welcome to BCOP

1.1 Welcome from the chair

Welcome, and thank you for your interest in BCOP.

Trustees play a vital role in ensuring that BCOP continues to fulfil its charitable purpose, operates with integrity, and remains financially and operationally sustainable for the long term. Trusteeship is both a responsibility and a privilege, and the Board is collectively accountable for the stewardship of the charity on behalf of its beneficiaries.

Whether you are a newly appointed trustee or an established member of the Board, this pack is intended to support you in understanding your role and responsibilities as a trustee of BCOP.

1.2 Why become a BCOP trustee?

Becoming a trustee at BCOP is an opportunity to use your skills and experience to make a lasting difference to the lives of older people across Birmingham.

For almost 80 years, BCOP has been providing high-quality care, housing and support to older people. Today, our trustees play an important role in ensuring that the charity remains true to its purpose, financially sustainable and well governed, while supporting the organisation to respond to the changing needs of later life.

As a trustee, you won't be involved in the day-to-day management of the charity. Instead, you'll work alongside fellow trustees and the executive team to help shape BCOP's future, providing strategic oversight, constructive challenge and independent judgement.

Our Board brings together people from a wide range of professional backgrounds and experiences. Some trustees have many years of board experience, while others are taking on their first trustee role. What they share is a commitment to BCOP's values and a desire to make a positive contribution.

As one of our trustees, John Bennett, reflects:

"I still felt that I'd something I could contribute to an organisation... Making a tangible difference, learning new skills, and working with a board in a different sector was exciting."

New trustee Lydia Willetts describes her experience this way:

"Being surrounded by the other trustees who're all from different backgrounds and bring different expertise is a privilege and I learn something new at every meeting."

Whether you are looking to broaden your leadership experience, contribute your professional expertise or simply give something back to your local community, becoming a BCOP trustee offers the opportunity to help shape services that enrich the lives of older people in Birmingham.

1.3 Ten things to know about being a BCOP trustee

Before you read the rest of this pack, here are ten things worth knowing.

1. You'll help shape the future of a charity that has supported older people in Birmingham since 1946.

2. Trustees provide strategic leadership and oversight rather than managing day-to-day operations.
3. You'll join a friendly Board whose members bring a wide range of professional skills and experience.
4. Previous trustee experience isn't essential. Curiosity, sound judgement and a commitment to BCOP's values are just as important.
5. You'll receive a structured induction and ongoing opportunities to develop your knowledge and governance skills.
6. The role is voluntary, although reasonable expenses are reimbursed.
7. Trustees normally serve on at least one Board committee and contribute to strategy discussions and occasional working groups.
8. You'll help ensure BCOP remains financially sustainable, well governed and focused on delivering high-quality care and housing services.
9. Every trustee shares collective responsibility for Board decisions and acts in the best interests of BCOP and its beneficiaries.
10. Most importantly, you'll help ensure that older people across Birmingham can continue to receive safe homes with care that comes from the heart.

1.4 Purpose of this trustee information pack

This trustee information pack provides an overview of the governance framework within which BCOP operates and sets out the core responsibilities, expectations and practical arrangements for trustees.

Its purpose is to:

- support trustees in meeting their legal and regulatory duties
- explain how governance operates at BCOP
- clarify the respective roles of the Board and the executive team
- provide a consistent reference point for trustees over time

This pack is designed to remain relevant for several years and focuses on governance rather than operational or time-specific information.

1.5 How this pack should be used

This pack should be read alongside other key documents, including BCOP's governing document, policies, and the most recent Annual Report and accounts.

It does not provide:

- detailed descriptions of services
- operational procedures

- performance information or annual achievements
- recruitment information for trustee vacancies

Such information is provided separately and updated more frequently.

Trustees are encouraged to use this pack as a reference document and to revisit it periodically, particularly when considering strategic decisions or when questions arise about governance, accountability or trustee responsibilities.

2. BCOP at a glance

2.1 Our charitable purpose

BCOP (Broadening Choices for Older People) is a Birmingham-based charity, established in 1946, that exists to support older people to live with dignity, independence and security.

BCOP delivers its charitable purpose through:

- nursing homes providing high dependency nursing, dementia care and end of life care
- supported living and independent living housing schemes
- services and environments that promote wellbeing, safety and independence

BCOP is both a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Any surpluses generated are reinvested into services, staff and buildings to support long-term sustainability and quality of provision.

2.2 Who we support and where we work

BCOP supports older people across Birmingham, responding to a wide range of needs and circumstances.

Some people require specialist nursing or end of life care; others need secure, well-managed housing with varying levels of support. BCOP's services are designed to offer appropriate care and housing at different stages of later life, enabling people to live in safe, comfortable and supportive environments.

BCOP works in partnership with local authorities, health services and other organisations to ensure its services are well integrated, regulated and responsive to the needs of older people in the city.

Further detail about BCOP's services, properties and activities is set out in our Annual Report and on the charity's website, bcop.org.uk.

3. Vision, mission and values

3.1 Vision and mission

BCOP's vision is: Enriching lives for older people in Birmingham.

Its mission is: Providing safe homes with care that comes from the heart.

These statements underpin BCOP's strategic direction and reflect the organisation's long-standing commitment to dignity, compassion and person-centred support.

The Board has adopted a five-year Corporate Strategy (2025–2030), which sets out how the organisation will respond to future challenges and opportunities while remaining true to its purpose.

3.2 Our values

BCOP's values guide how the organisation operates and how decisions are made:

- **People at the heart of everything we do**
As a caring organisation, people – and their wellbeing – are at the heart of everything we do. Whether it's treating people as individuals or offering support to friends and families, as well as colleagues, everything we do is centred around people.
- **Little things matter**
We're all different and it's our individuality that makes our community special. We recognise and act on the little things, as these often can make all the difference. We know that it's the little things that make our services great places to live.
- **Working together to provide the best support**
As a team, we listen to and respect everyone. We work together with residents and their families as well as supporting agencies and external organisations. We know that we are stronger together, and as a team we can achieve more and get it right for our residents.
- **Adapting to our residents' needs**
We want to provide the best care possible – that's why we challenge ourselves and look for ways to develop and learn new skills. We're always open to evolving and moving forward with our care. In our housing services, we want to empower people to share their voice and help shape services.

These values are embedded within BCOP's strategy, culture and approach to governance.

3.3 Strategy and the role of trustees

The Board has adopted a five-year Corporate Strategy (2025–2030), which translates BCOP's vision, mission and values into clear strategic priorities and delivery plans.

Trustees are responsible for:

- approving the strategic direction of the charity
- ensuring the strategy remains aligned with BCOP's charitable purpose and values

- monitoring progress against strategic priorities
- providing appropriate challenge and support to the executive team

Trustees should use BCOP's values as a framework for decision-making, ensuring that strategic and governance decisions remain consistent with the organisation's ethos and responsibilities.

4.1 Legal status and regulation

BCOP (Broadening Choices for Older People) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It operates within a legal and regulatory framework designed to ensure that charities are well governed, financially responsible and accountable to their beneficiaries and the public.

BCOP is regulated by:

- the Charity Commission for England and Wales
- Companies House, in its capacity as a charitable company
- the Regulator of Social Housing, in relation to its housing activities
- the Care Quality Commission, in relation to our nursing homes

Trustees are responsible for ensuring that BCOP complies with the requirements of its regulators and operates in accordance with its governing document and applicable legislation.

4.2 The legal duties of trustees

Trustees have a legal duty to act in the best interests of BCOP and to ensure that the charity is run effectively and responsibly.

In summary, trustees must:

- ensure that BCOP is carrying out its charitable purposes for the public benefit
- comply with BCOP's governing document and relevant laws and regulations
- act with reasonable care and skill, using their knowledge and experience appropriately
- manage the charity's resources responsibly, including safeguarding assets and ensuring financial sustainability
- ensure that BCOP is accountable, transparent and able to demonstrate good governance

These duties apply to all trustees equally, regardless of background, professional expertise or length of service.

4.3 Collective responsibility and decision-making

Trustees act collectively as a Board. Decisions are taken together, and trustees share responsibility for those decisions.

This means that:

- no individual trustee has authority to act on behalf of BCOP unless formally delegated
- trustees are jointly accountable for Board decisions, even where they may have held differing views during discussion

- once a decision has been made, trustees are expected to support it collectively

Trustees are appointed for their skills and experience, but they do not represent personal, professional or external interests. Trustees must always act in the best interests of BCOP and its beneficiaries.

Clear collective decision-making supports effective governance, accountability and the long-term sustainability of the charity.

5. Governance at BCOP

5.1 The board of trustees

BCOP is governed by a Board of Trustees, which is collectively responsible for the overall direction, governance and oversight of the charity.

The Board:

- sets the strategic direction of the charity
- ensures that BCOP operates in furtherance of its charitable purposes
- oversees compliance with legal and regulatory requirements
- safeguards the charity's assets, reputation and values
- holds the executive team to account for the delivery of agreed objectives

The Board acts collectively and decisions are taken in accordance with BCOP's governing document.

5.2 Role of the chair

The Chair is responsible for providing leadership to the Board and for ensuring that the Board operates effectively.

The Chair's role includes:

- leading Board meetings and setting agendas in conjunction with the executive team
- ensuring that trustees receive accurate, timely and relevant information
- promoting constructive challenge and inclusive decision-making
- acting as a point of liaison between the Board and the Chief Executive
- supporting the induction and development of trustees

The Chair does not have individual authority beyond that delegated by the Board.

5.3 Committees and their remits

The Board has established committees to support its work and to provide additional scrutiny in key areas.

BCOP currently operates the following standing committees:

- Audit Committee, which supports the Board in its oversight of financial management, internal controls, risk and assurance
- Operations Committee, which supports the Board in its oversight of operational performance, service delivery and regulatory compliance

Committees:

- operate under written terms of reference approved by the Board

- meet on a regular basis to support the Board's work
- make recommendations to the Board rather than decisions, unless authority has been formally delegated
- report to the Board on their discussions, findings and recommendations

All trustees are normally expected to serve on at least one committee, subject to skills, experience and availability.

The Board retains overall responsibility and accountability for matters considered by its committees.

5.4 Scheme of delegation

The Board delegates authority for the day-to-day management of the charity to the Chief Executive, within a clear framework of delegated authority.

The scheme of delegation:

- sets out matters reserved to the Board
- defines the authority delegated to the Chief Executive and senior staff
- supports effective and timely decision-making while maintaining appropriate oversight

The Board remains ultimately accountable for all decisions taken under delegated authority.

5.5 Relationship between the Board and the executive

The relationship between the Board and the executive team is based on trust, openness and mutual respect.

In practice:

- the Board focuses on strategy, oversight and governance
- the executive team is responsible for operational delivery and management
- trustees provide support and challenge without becoming involved in day-to-day operations

Clear separation of roles helps ensure effective governance and supports the delivery of BCOP's charitable objectives.

5.6 Review of governance arrangements

The Board keeps its governance arrangements under regular review to ensure they remain effective and proportionate.

This includes:

- reviewing Board and committee effectiveness

- ensuring appropriate skills and experience are available at Board level
- updating governance structures and processes as required

Any changes to governance arrangements are approved by the Board.

In addition to formal Board and committee meetings, trustees may be asked to participate in:

- periodic strategic planning sessions
- events bringing together trustees and senior staff
- time-limited working groups established to support specific projects or areas of work

Participation in such activities supports effective governance and informed decision-making but does not alter the distinction between governance and operational management.

6. The role of a BCOP trustee

6.1 Core responsibilities

Trustees of BCOP are collectively responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity. In carrying out this role, trustees must act only in the best interests of BCOP and its beneficiaries.

Trustees are accountable to BCOP's beneficiaries and to the relevant regulators for the proper governance of the charity.

The core responsibilities of trustees include:

- ensuring that BCOP pursues its charitable purposes and operates in line with its governing document
- setting the strategic direction of the charity and monitoring progress against agreed objectives
- ensuring that BCOP complies with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements
- overseeing the effective and prudent use of the charity's resources
- safeguarding the charity's assets, reputation and values
- holding the executive team to account while supporting them appropriately

Trustees act collectively as a Board and share responsibility for decisions taken.

6.2 Expected standards of conduct

Trustees are expected to act with integrity, objectivity and openness at all times.

In practice, this means trustees should:

- act in good faith and in the best interests of the charity
- exercise independent judgement and provide constructive challenge
- respect the principle of collective decision-making
- maintain confidentiality where required
- uphold BCOP's values and promote a positive governance culture

Trustees are also expected to act as ambassadors for BCOP, supporting and promoting its charitable aims in a manner consistent with their role.

6.3 Time commitment and attendance

Trustees are expected to commit sufficient time to fulfil their duties effectively and to prepare properly for meetings and decision-making. We ask them to commit to a minimum of 75% attendance at meetings or their membership of the Board may be reviewed.

The time commitment for trustees typically includes:

- attendance at Board meetings

- membership of at least one Board committee
- preparation for meetings, including reading papers in advance
- participation in periodic strategy sessions, development activities or time-limited working groups, where appropriate

Trustees are expected to attend meetings regularly and to contribute constructively to discussions. The Board seeks to operate in a way that recognises trustees' other commitments while ensuring that governance responsibilities are discharged effectively.

6.4. Person specification

BCOP trustees should have an interest in the accommodation, support and care for older people.

Our Trustees need to have basic IT skills and access to email.

The Board wishes to recruit new trustees who can bring passion and commitment to the role and who will relish the opportunity to help shape the future strategy and direction of the charity. We're very interested in applications from those who have been affected by the services we offer. It is not necessary for applicants to have been involved in Board level roles previously. We particularly welcome applications from individuals with skills in:

- Social housing property/capital projects
- Senior/strategic expertise in care home sector
- Human Resources
- Business development / commercial acumen
- Marketing & fundraising
- Finance
- Charity or employment law

6.5 Conflicts of interest and confidentiality

Trustees must avoid situations in which their personal interests, or the interests of a connected person or organisation, conflict with those of BCOP.

Trustees are required to:

- declare actual or potential conflicts of interest promptly
- comply with BCOP's conflicts of interest policy
- withdraw from discussions or decisions where a conflict exists

Trustees must also respect the confidentiality of sensitive information obtained through their role and ensure that such information is handled appropriately.

6.6 Acting collectively and being accountable

Trustees are jointly and severally responsible for the decisions of the Board.

While trustees may be appointed for their individual skills or experience, they do not represent personal, professional or external interests and do not act in an executive capacity.

Once decisions have been made by the Board, trustees are expected to support those decisions collectively, even where individual views may have differed during discussion.

7. Oversight of finance, risk and safeguarding

7.1 Trustee responsibilities for financial oversight

Trustees are collectively responsible for ensuring that BCOP manages its finances prudently and in a way that supports the charity's long-term sustainability and charitable purposes.

This includes responsibility for:

- approving budgets and financial plans
- monitoring financial performance and cash flow
- ensuring appropriate financial controls and systems are in place
- overseeing the preparation of annual accounts and the audit or independent examination process
- ensuring that financial risks are identified and managed

Trustees are not involved in the day-to-day management of finances but must be satisfied that appropriate assurance and reporting arrangements are in place.

7.2 Risk management and assurance

The Board is responsible for ensuring that BCOP has an effective approach to identifying, assessing and managing risk.

Trustee responsibilities include:

- maintaining oversight of the charity's principal risks
- ensuring that risk management is integrated into strategic planning and decision-making
- reviewing risk information provided by the executive team
- seeking assurance that appropriate mitigation measures are in place

Trustees should take a proportionate approach to risk, recognising both the need to protect the charity and the importance of enabling it to pursue its charitable aims effectively.

7.3 Safeguarding responsibilities

Safeguarding is a core responsibility of the Board and applies to residents, tenants, staff and volunteers at BCOP.

Trustees must ensure that BCOP:

- has appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place
- promotes a culture in which safeguarding concerns can be raised and addressed
- complies with relevant safeguarding legislation and regulatory requirements
- manages safeguarding risks in a proactive and transparent manner

Trustees are responsible for ensuring that serious safeguarding incidents are managed appropriately and, where required, reported to the relevant authorities, including the Charity Commission.

7.4 Serious incidents and regulatory reporting

Trustees are responsible for ensuring that serious incidents, including those relating to safeguarding, financial loss, governance failure or reputational risk, are identified and reported in line with Charity Commission requirements.

This includes:

- understanding what constitutes a serious incident
- ensuring that appropriate internal reporting processes are in place
- satisfying themselves that reports are made promptly and accurately when required

The Board should seek assurance that learning from serious incidents is used to strengthen governance, systems and controls.

8. Key policies and governance documents

8.1 Essential policies for trustees

Trustees are responsible for ensuring that BCOP has appropriate policies in place and that these are reviewed and applied effectively.

While trustees are not expected to be familiar with every operational policy, there are several key governance and assurance policies with which trustees should be familiar. These typically include policies relating to:

- conflicts of interest
- safeguarding
- financial controls and reserves
- risk management
- complaints and whistleblowing
- data protection and confidentiality
- codes of conduct for trustees and staff

The Board reviews and approves key policies in line with an agreed review cycle.

8.2 Accessing and reviewing governance documents

Current versions of BCOP's policies and governance documents are held separately from this trustee information pack and are made available to trustees through the Board's agreed document-sharing arrangements.

Trustees are expected to:

- ensure they are referring to the most up-to-date versions of policies and documents
- read and understand policies relevant to their role as trustees
- raise questions or concerns where clarification is required

9. Being a trustee in practice

9.1 Board and committee meetings

The Board of Trustees meets on a quarterly basis to consider strategy, governance, performance and assurance.

Board and committee meetings are structured to enable informed discussion and effective decision-making. Trustees are expected to attend meetings regularly, having read papers in advance and prepared to contribute constructively. A Board meeting typically lasts about 3 hours, plus preparation time and refreshments are provided.

New trustees will also be invited to join one of two committees (Audit and Operations). Each committee meets in advance of Board meetings, on a Wednesday morning and a meeting typically takes 2 hours. Following each committee meeting there are optional provider visits to the nursing home or housing scheme where the meeting is being held.

BCOP trustees are expected to participate in planning events to discuss the strategic direction of the charity and there are opportunities to join Working Groups focused on particular projects or proposals.

Meetings may be held in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format, depending on circumstances. We rotate our meetings between BCOP venues.

Finally, dedicated time would also be required from new Trustees for induction activities upon joining the Board.

9.2 Papers, information and communications

Trustees are provided with papers and information in advance of meetings to support effective oversight and decision-making.

Trustees are expected to:

- read papers in advance of meetings
- seek clarification where information is unclear or incomplete
- treat Board papers and information as confidential, where appropriate

Between meetings, trustees may receive updates or briefings from the executive team on matters relevant to governance or risk.

9.3 Induction, training and development

All new trustees are supported through an induction process designed to help them understand BCOP, its governance arrangements and their role as a trustee.

Trustees are encouraged to:

- participate in induction activities
- undertake ongoing learning and development relevant to their role
- make use of external guidance and training where appropriate

The Board recognises the importance of continuous development in supporting effective governance.

9.4 Expenses and practical arrangements

The role of trustee is voluntary. Reasonable expenses incurred in the course of trustees' duties may be claimed in line with BCOP's expenses policy.

Practical arrangements relating to meetings, papers and expenses are communicated to trustees separately and kept under review to ensure they support effective participation.

10. Keeping information up to date

10.1 Documents not included in this pack

This trustee information pack is intended to provide a stable overview of BCOP's governance framework and trustee responsibilities. It does not include documents or information that are subject to regular change.

The following are intentionally excluded from this pack:

- detailed descriptions of services and operational activity
- annual performance information and achievements
- financial results, budgets and management accounts
- business plans and time-limited strategies
- trustee recruitment information and role-specific skills requirements

These documents are maintained separately and updated as required.

10.2 Where to find current and operational information

Trustees are provided with access to current and operational information through a range of other documents and channels, including:

- the Annual Report and accounts
- Board and committee papers
- the charity's website and internal document repositories
- briefings and updates from the executive team

Trustees are expected to ensure they are familiar with the most up-to-date information when making decisions or providing oversight.

10.3 Review of this trustee information pack

This trustee information pack is reviewed periodically to ensure it remains accurate, relevant and aligned with regulatory expectations and good governance practice.

Responsibility for reviewing the pack sits with the Board of Trustees, with amendments approved by the Board as required. Updates are made on a planned basis rather than in response to short-term operational or strategic changes.

Trustees will be notified of any substantive changes to the content of this pack.

10. How to apply

If you are interested in becoming a trustee, please complete the online application form on our website <https://bcop.org.uk/about-us/>.

If you have any questions, please contact Helen Middleton by emailing executive.assitant@bcop.org.uk or phone us on 012 459 7670.

Closing date: Recruitment is ongoing and applications will be reviewed as they are received.